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Our Duty to Cuba

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Location and Area.—Cuba, the largest of the Antilles, at its nearest point is no more than ninety miles from Key West, Fla. The island is about seven hundred and fifty miles long, with an average width of fifty miles, and has an area of about 43,220 square miles. It is a little larger than Ireland and not so large as England.

Population.—At the close of the Spanish-American War the population of Cuba numbered about 1,600,000 souls, but it has grown now to about 2,200,000. A great many people from the United States have gone to live on the island since the war, and a far greater number of immigrants have come from Spain and the Canary Islands. The proportion of the white people to the negroes in Cuba is about two to one—about the same as that of the State of Louisiana.

Religion.—In common with all the other lands of Latin America, the religion of the Cuban people has been Roman Catholicism. The Reformation, which affected so benignly the nations of Northern Europe, was arrested in Spain, and hence its influence did not extend to the dependencies of Spain in the New World. By consequence Latin America has

not known the progress and prosperity of North America. The English colonies, which have grown into the United States of America, are now more wealthy and powerful than all Latin America combined; and this is not the result of the superiority of Anglo-Saxon blood to Latin blood, as some erroneously suppose. All history contradicts such a notion. The difference has been far more a matter of religion than a matter of race. Give the Latin-American peoples the enlightening and quickening influences of evangelical Christianity, and they will show themselves strong and prosperous. Their advancement has been delayed by the burden of superstition and priestcraft which they have had to carry. The coming of Protestant missions into these belated lands is nothing more nor less than the coming of the life-giving reformation to their shores.

America's Double Debt.—Politically, the United States guards its republican institutions against monarchical encroachments by what is called the Monroe Doctrine, and correspondingly the Protestant Churches of the United States owe them brotherly help in securing their religious freedom by carrying to them the open Bible and the preached Word. This debt they owe to Cuba in an especial degree. Our nation helped to liberate Cuba from Spanish oppression, but our duty will be but half done until our Churches help the Cuban people to escape the thralldom of Romanism without falling into the worse evil of religionlessness.

To Save a Nation.—We must give Cuba the benefits of the long-delayed reformation in order to save the Cuban nation. Our government has pledged to all the world good order in Cuba. But orderly government cannot be secured by force of arms and repeated interventions; it must be secured by the highest religious motives filling the hearts and controll-

ing the lives of the people. Good government must be found in faith. Lamartine points out this fact with reference to his own loved France, saying: "I know, and I sigh when I think of it, that hitherto the French people have been the least religious of all the nations of Europe. . . . The republic of these men without a God was quickly stranded. The liberty won by so much heroism and so much genius did not find in France a conscience to shelter it, a God to revenge it, a people to defend it against that atheism which was called glory." If we wish to save the "Pearl of the Antilles" from a similar doom, we must, with all haste, propagate in Cuba the only religion that can sustain republican institutions. If we wish to see to the south of us this beautiful island filled with a tranquil, peaceful, and prosperous people, having no need of costly and irritating interventions, we must give to the Cuban people evangelical Churches and the religion of the open Bible. In this solemn matter our duty and our interest coincide. To enlighten and evangelize Cuba should be our joy; to enslave Cuba, or to allow any other power, political or ecclesiastical, to enslave Cuba, should have no place in all our thoughts. The intervention which is least expensive and most blessed is the brotherly and Christian intervention of the gospel of peace under the leadership of the Prince of Peace.

Ours the Only Methodism in the Field.—At the close of the Spanish-American War the island of Cuba was left by agreement to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to do all that Methodism is called to do there. No other Methodism is there, nor will any other Methodist Church enter that field. Whatever mission Methodism may have in Cuba our Church alone must fulfill. If we should fail in China, Korea, or Japan, or if we should for any cause

withdraw from any of those fields, there would remain some other Methodist Church to carry on the work. But such is not the case in Cuba. We must do the Methodist work there, if it is to be done at all.

Coextensive with the Island.—Our work extends throughout the island, as is not the case with the work of some other Churches. The Northern Baptists confine their work to the two provinces of Camaguey and Santiago, in the eastern part of the island, while the Southern Baptists occupy the four provinces of Santa Clara, Matanzas, Havana, and Pinar del Rio, in the central and western parts. The Northern Presbyterians labor in the western and central sections, and the Southern Presbyterians, with headquarters at Cardenas, confine their work to the northeastern coast of Cuba, in the main within the provinces of Santa Clara and Matanzas. The Protestant Episcopal Church has a missionary bishop in Cuba, but its stations are far less numerous than ours and its Church membership is not nearly so large. The Quakers are few in number and the Congregationalists have abandoned the field, having turned over such work as they had to the Northern Presbyterians.

Membership and Ministry.—The membership of our Church in Cuba amounts to nearly or quite one-third of all the members of all the Protestant Churches on the island, and our stations are found in every province. We have churches in Pinar del Rio, Havana, Matanzas, Santa Clara, Camaguey, and Santiago, the six provincial capitals, and in Cardenas, Cienfuegos, and Guantanamo, three of the larger cities which are not provincial capitals, besides churches which we have in many of the smaller cities and towns. Our work being thus extended to every part of the island, and having such a ministerial supply and such a large

Church membership, there rests upon our Church a responsibility for the evangelization of Cuba greater than that on any other Protestant Church in the United States. What we do, or fail to do, must greatly affect the religious welfare of the Cuban people, if Protestantism has any mission to them. As goes the cause of Methodism in the island, so will go the work of Protestantism there. Our obligation is too great and serious for boasting; it must be recognized, accepted, and fully discharged in the fear of God and the love of man.

Our Schools in Cuba.

Methodism from the first, at home and abroad has had a care for the enlightenment of the people. It is most natural that such should be the case. Romanism withholds the Bible from the people and denies them the right of private judgment in its interpretation. Hence it has little motive to educate the masses except in such things as make for ecclesiastical domination of them. But Protestantism is under the highest obligation to enlighten the people. It offers them the open Bible, and says: "Read it and understand it for yourselves. It is a Book safe in the hands of all the people."

The Irene Toland School.—In Matanzas is located the Irene Toland School, a boarding school for girls. It is housed now in a beautiful building of its own, after remaining many years in rented quarters, and it is doing great good. Among its pupils have been the daughters of the late President of the Cuban Republic Hon. Thomas Estrada de Palma.

The Eliza Bowman School.—The Eliza Bowman School, in Cienfuegos, is another boarding school for girls, which was founded and is sustained by the Woman's Missionary Council. It also is now no longer a renter, but has a good building of its own, filled with a large number

of pupils. In Camaguey and in Bartle also we have schools, and there are smaller schools kept open at other points in the island. The work done in the schools has yielded much fruit in increasing and improving the membership of the Churches.

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